1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

the Mosquito Coast make current use of these various "remedies," and that the Miskito women have the habit of mixing from time to time a small portion of their menstrual blood in the wabul for her husband, in order to keep the latter's affection.

PREMARRIAGE ORDEALS.—Before a young Sumu is allowed to have a wife he must give proof of his ability to shoulder the responsibilities of married life—that he is indeed a man. A council of the elder men of the village or district will investigate any complaint brought against the would-be bridegroom and he has to undergo certain ordeals. The latter consist of more or less rigid fasting, flogging, scarification, and the like. If he cries out or merely moans he will have to submit to the ordeal on a future occasion. The candidate for marriage bends down his bare back, whereupon all the married men punch him as hard as they can with their elbow. He endures the pain without a groan, for the women are there as spectators of his powers of endurance. If he is unpopular he may receive a severe beating, and occasionally accidents arise in this manner. Then an elderly man beats him with a whip made from tapir hide, consisting of two strings twisted like a rope, and having about 1 inch diameter. A young man is not considered worthy of a wife unless he is able to endure this ordeal with fortitude. If he has stolidly endured all these pains he is allowed to marry. He makes a canoe, bows and arrows, and other weapons, and he brings game and firewood to his fiancée. He also prepares the plantation for his prospective wife in order to prove that he is able to perform the duties of a future family head.

MARRIAGE TABOOS.—The children of two brothers or of two sisters are considered real brothers and sisters and they are not allowed to marry each other. The ban against the marriage of these cousins probably owes its origin to the fact that such children were often really half brothers and half sisters. Upon the death of his wife a man generally married her sister; similarly, if a woman had lost her husband, she was taken in marriage by her brother-in-law. For that reason the names for stepfather and father's brother, on the one hand, and for stepmother and mother's sister are identical in most of the dialects spoken on the Mosquito Coast. On the other hand, the children of brother and sister are not considered blood relatives, and a union between such cousins is the common, and originally perhaps the only, marriage allowed. Unions of this kind are still encouraged to this day, for it is felt that family ties are strengthened thereby.

Marriage between an Indian and a near relative of his *libra* or "covenant friend," and his *lapya* or "birth friend" is also banned, although such connections are not blood relations (M.: *taya;* T.: *möh;* P.: *wandih;* U.: *wanih*).

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

BETROTHAL AND TRIAL MARRIAGE.—The children are sometimes engaged by their respective parents while still in early infancy, even at the age of 5 or 6 years. The young boy makes his fiancée and her parents a small present, and helps them occasionally in their work. When she arrives at the age of puberty (about 10 years) he takes her as his wife. The man is considered a member of his wife's family and he goes to live in the house of his parents-in-law. When the family enlarges he will build a house of his own near by. Perhaps a misunderstanding of the above facts has led M. W. (309) to state that a system of trial marriage existed in those days among the Miskito. According to this author the probationary period lasted about two years, at the end of which a feast was prepared and then the union was considered legitimate, there being no ceremony. To-day the young man marries generally at the age of from 16 to 18, the girl at about 12.

WEDDING.—Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 253; French edit.: II, 267–268) gives the following account of the marriage ceremony of the Miskito during the latter part of the seventeenth century. The father, after assuring himself that the lover was an expert hunter and fisher, ordered his daughter to bring a calabash of a beverage prepared from pineapples and honey; the suitor drank one-half of the contents and then tendered the remainder to his future wife to drink. According to this same author the buccaneers had the habit of buying a Miskito woman for a knife, ax, or hatchet, upon their arrival at Cabo Gracias a Dios. She was obliged to remain with him during the time he stayed at the settlement and to supply him with the products of the plantation, while he went out hunting and fishing. (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 249).

Among the Sumu the nuptial ceremony is performed by an elderly man who first gives the couple a long talk. Then the two aspirants join the thumb of the right hand, whereupon he separates their hands by cutting through with his own hand. There is no record of the chiefs having possessed the *jus primæ noctis* as appears to have been the case with the Chorotega (Orotiña) of the Pacific coast of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Marriage with other tribes was not permitted in former days by the Sumu, and the children of strangers were killed. This accounts for the fact that the Sumu have kept themselves free from foreign admixtures, whereas the Miskito intermarry with all races and absorb everything. The Sumu are very jealous of their wives and until recent times did not allow them to converse with strangers.

MOTHER-IN-LAW TABOO.—As soon as the marriage ceremony has taken place the young Sumu husband must not speak any more to his mother-in-law, nor even look at her. When he is at home she remains in her own apartment, which is separated from the remainder

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
SA15 Mosquito SA15

Among the *Mosquito* and *Sumo* a man who has been wronged is considered a coward if he does not avenge himself. If revenge fails, both the offended man and the perpetrator of the offense are supposed to commit suicide. A thief, when caught, must return double the amount stolen. A creditor may help himself to his debtor's property, or he may destroy the property of a third person, in which case the debtor must pay the damage (*Mosquito*). An adulterous wife is beaten and forced to reveal the name of her lover, who is fined. A murderer is killed, unless he commits suicide, and his memory is dishonored. There is, however, no dishonor in poisoning an enemy, the method employed for most murders.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

A man and woman may agree to marry, or, more rarely, the girl's parents may make marriage arrangements without her consent. Child betrothals are common. Cross-cousin marriage is frequent, but marriage between parallel-cousins and closer relations is forbidden. *Mosquito* and *Sumo* chiefs and shamans have several wives, and the *Paya* of Río Platano and Río Paulaya practice polygyny, as do the *Jicaque*.

Before marriage a man must pass through various ordeals, pay the bride's family an agreed sum, and prepare a field for his prospective wife. The wedding is a simple ceremony. The levirate and sororate are practiced, and the many possible exceptions to this rule are adjusted by payments. A man may abandon his wife if she is barren. Divorce is accomplished by means of payments to the families of offended parties. The woman always keeps the children. Among numerous relationship taboos are the important mother-in-law taboo and the prohibition on a man's speaking to his sister-in-law and to other close female relatives by marriage.

LIFE CYCLE

Childbirth.—The *Paya* and *Mosquito* build special confinement huts; the *Sumo* partition off a corner of the house. During parturition the mother is aided by another woman who cuts the cord with a piece of bamboo. The afterbirth and umbilical cord are buried. Among the *Paya* a midwife is regarded by parents and child as a blood relative. This belief is said to have originated among the *Mosquito* and diffused to the *Sumo* and *Paya*. The second of twins and deformed children are killed (*Mosquito* and *Sumo*). Some female children were killed at birth.

Sumo and *Mosquito* women bathe immediately after bearing a child, *Paya* women on the third day. *Sumo* women take a steam bath but use no special structure; in other tribes they bathe in the river. This bath ends a period of ritual impurity. *Mosquito* women, however, are considered impure for one or two weeks. Women also observe a special diet. The return of the mother to the house is celebrated with a ceremony.